

New law leads to conviction



NATIONAL

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — A former minister was convicted Wednesday of violating the nation's new abortion clinic access law for a shotgun attack that killed an abortion doctor and his bodyguard.

A federal jury deliberated just over two hours before finding Paul Hill guilty of three counts of violating the new law. He also was found guilty of a federal firearm charge.

Hill showed no emotion during the reading of the verdict, but after the jury left the courtroom, he smiled broadly and shook hands with his two standby attorneys. The 40-year-old could get life in prison.

Hill has said that murder is justifiable if it stops abortions. But he was barred from presenting that defense during the three-day trial.

Acting as his own lawyer, Hill called no witnesses, cross-examined none of the prosecution's witnesses and presented no evidence.

His brief closing argument was almost identical to his opening statement: "This government is unjust because it does not protect innocent life. To the extent we take part in this evil, we must

answer to God. May God help us all."

Witnesses testified Hill ambushed Dr. John B. Britton, James H. Barrett and Barrett's wife, June, with a 12-gauge shotgun as the three arrived July 29 at a Pensacola abortion clinic. Britton and Barrett died in the barrage of shotgun fire. Mrs. Barrett was wounded.

Hill is the first person to stand trial under the federal law passed earlier this year against injuring or otherwise interfering with people entering abortion clinics.

Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, said the verdict was "certainly a very important victory."

Earlier in the day, Mrs. Barrett testified that Hill stood in the parking lot of the clinic as she, her husband and the doctor arrived in a pickup. Hill approached the parked truck, holding something, she said.

"I didn't identify it as a gun," she testified. "I said, 'Paul is pretending he is going to shoot us like kids do.'"

Her perception was shattered seconds later. "I heard this 'boom,' and I said 'My God, he is shooting at us!'" she testified.

Mrs. Barrett, 68, who sat in the back seat of the truck, was hit in the breast and left arm.

Woman accuses bus driver of assault

CINCINNATI (AP) — A woman who says she has 10 personalities accused a bus driver of sexual assault. Two of her personalities claim she consented to sex.

Joseph Howard, 47, was indicted July 28 on a sexual battery charge. He says he never touched the 22-year-old woman.

Howard's lawyer, Maurice White, said Wednesday he wants a judge to order an independent psychologist to examine the woman to determine if she is capable of telling the truth.

"The doctors I've spoken to say that multiple personality people are notorious for faulty memory. They're not credible,"

White said.

White also wants to question all 10 of the woman's personalities in a deposition. The woman has told investigators they saw the attack.

Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Thomas Crush will consider both requests at an Oct. 13 hearing. No trial date has been set.

Howard, meanwhile, is free on bond and has been on unpaid leave from his job since June 28. If convicted, he could be sentenced to up to two years in jail and fined up to \$5,000.

The woman was a passenger June 16 on a bus run by ACCESS, an agency that pro-

vides public transportation to the elderly and people with physical and mental handicaps.

She told police Howard dropped off the other passengers, parked the bus, pushed her to the floor and sexually assaulted her.

Assistant county prosecutor John O'Shea said at a Sept. 18 hearing that one of the woman's personalities — identified as Mitchell — said she consented to sex, and that another personality she identified as her bodyguard Mitch claimed he arranged the sex. The Cincinnati Enquirer reported Wednesday.

O'Shea did not return telephone calls seeking comment.

San Quentin Prison's gas chamber closed

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The door to San Quentin Prison's gas chamber may have slammed shut for the last time, ending a 56-year history in which 196 of California's most notorious criminals were put to death by breathing cyanide.

U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel ruled Tuesday that the acid-green chamber is cruel and unusual punishment that kills by causing an intense "air hunger" similar to strangulation or drowning.

If the ruling stands, the state's death penalty will be carried out by lethal injection, a method added as an option last year. The state plans to appeal.

Three other states still use the gas chamber: Arizona, North Carolina and Mississippi. But Mississippi's applies only to convicts sentenced to death before 1984; those sentenced since then are executed by injection.

California's gas chamber was installed at San Quentin in 1938. It was hailed as a big improvement over hanging, a leftover from the rough-and-tumble frontier days.

But since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed states to resume using the death penalty in 1976, only two men have been gassed: Robert Alton Harris in 1992 and David Mason in 1993.

Harris shot two teen-agers to death in 1978 so he could use their car in a bank robbery. Mason robbed and killed four elderly people in 1980 and

strangled a cellmate in 1982.

During an execution, two cheesecloth bags of cyanide pellets are suspended beneath the condemned man's chair. When a lever is pulled from the other side of a wall, the bags drop into vats of acid, creating deadly hydrocyanic gas.

"Symptoms of air hunger include intense chest pains, such as felt during a heart attack, acute anxiety, and struggling to breathe," Patel, who was appointed by President Carter in 1980, said in her ruling. She said there may also be other types of pain, including "the exquisitely painful muscle spasms."

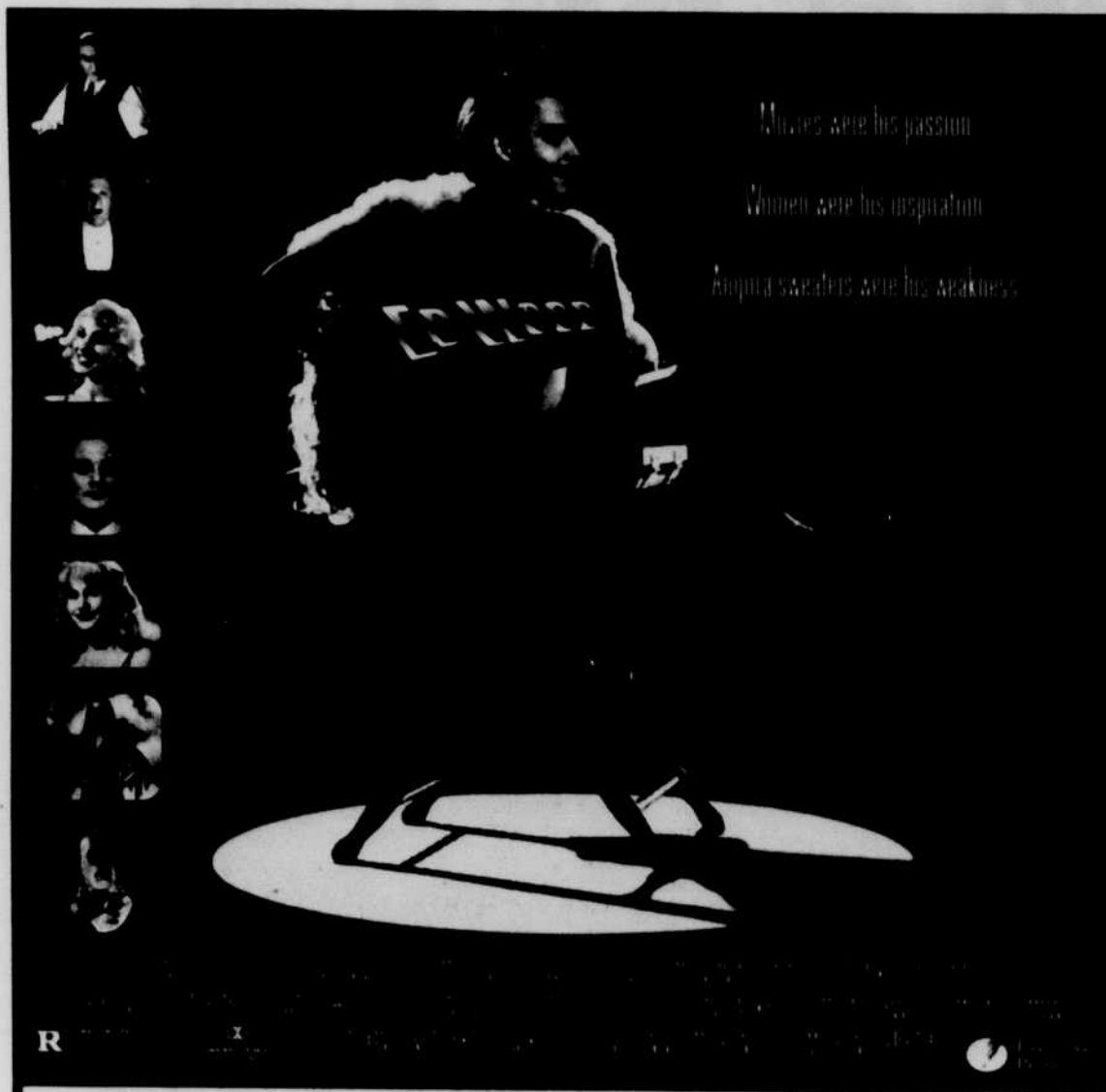
From the start, there were questions about the gas chamber's effectiveness as a deterrent.

In his book "Public Justice, Private Mercy," former Gov. Edmund G. "Pat" Brown recalled how a plumber serving time for robbery was among those drafted to build the chamber. He helped install it and watched test pigs die as the gas was tested.

But none of that seemed to have much effect on the plumber.

Within a year, he was paroled, committed murder, was sentenced to die and met his end in the device he had helped build.

While the plumber died in relative obscurity, others have captured the attention and imagination of the state and the nation.



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Women were his inspiration
Angry sweaters were his weakness

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